

Neighborhood News

City of Savannah - Bureau of Public Development
Community Planning & Development / Community Services Departments



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Graffiti...it's not Art, it is a CRIME!

Graffiti, seen by some as artwork or a means of self expression, is in fact vandalism and is becoming more prevalent throughout the city of Savannah. Graffiti vandals feel their actions harm no one, when in fact it harms everyone; homeowners, businesses, schools and communities. Victims of graffiti and "tagging" feel violated and are left with the responsibility and cost of cleaning up the site.

Graffiti drains tax dollars, funds that could be used for education, roads and community improvements. A 1995 study by the National Graffiti Information Network estimates the national costs of graffiti removal to be around \$8 billion per year.

Graffiti causes both the community to look unsafe, and people to feel concerned about their personal safety. Areas filled with graffiti are less appealing to those who may be looking to buy or rent property, and it sends a message that the area has

begun a downward spiral.

Graffiti is a sign of urban decay and generates fear of crime and instability. It is destructive, costly and sends a message that residents of the community are not concerned about the appearance of their neighborhoods. This creates an open invitation for more littering, loitering and other graffiti. Unfortunately, it may also lead to an increase in other crimes and acts of violence.

Keep Savannah Beautiful, Crimestoppers and the City of Savannah are partners in combating graffiti. To report graffiti vandalism in your neighborhood, call the City's 311 call center. Customer service representatives are available to assist you Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Dial 3-1-1 within Savannah, or call (912)651-6565. Crimestoppers will also award up to \$2,500 for tips leading to the arrest of individuals involved in graffiti vandalism. To report a tip, call (912)234-2020.



Recycle Used Cell Phones

With more than 200 million wireless subscribers in the United States today, the need to keep used wireless phones out of landfills is more important than ever. Keep Savannah Beautiful and the Community Planning and Development Department are sponsoring a wireless recycling program through November

2007. Citizens are urged to drop off their used wireless phones at the Community Planning and Development office located at 2203 Abercorn Street.

With an average life span of 18 months, wireless phones are discarded at a rate of 130 million per year. A recycled phone can often be refurbished for reuse, or recycled

components can be used to make copper plumbing pipes, jewelry, automotive parts or rechargeable battery packs.

For additional information or to organize a drive, please contact Nathaniel Glover at (912)651-6520.



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Teen Leadership Summit

*Taking it to the Excel Zone:
Pursuing Personal, Future &
Community Excellence*

Saturday, November 3
8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Coastal Georgia Center
305 Fahm Street

Training tracks include Personal Development & Self Preparation, Preparing for the Future, and Building and Developing your Community. Refreshments and prizes will be provided.

For more information or to register, please call Lillian Grant-Baptiste, Leadership Development Coordinator, at 912-525-3100, ext. 1625.

The event is presented by the Chatham County Youth Commission in collaboration with the City of Savannah's Leadership Development Institute and Youth Council.

Neighborhood Focus

Strathmore Estates, a Hidden Gem of History



While driving by the east Savannah neighborhood of Strathmore Estates, one might only see the modest homes of ordinary appearance and think nothing more of the community. Certainly, the facades of the duplex, triplex and quadruplex buildings give the impression of a community of humble means. The structures do not sufficiently convey the neighborhood's long and rich history of providing affordable housing for the hard working families of Savannah.

A New Face

The owners of Strathmore Estates are now in negotiations with the non-profit development company, CHSA, Inc., to sell the property. If purchased by CHSA, plans will begin for the construction of a new mixed-income community. The negotiations and sale are scheduled to be complete by the end of the year. Following the sale, the planning process will begin and residents and community members will be asked to participate and give input on what they would like to see.

While the facelift and better living conditions are sorely needed, the true gems are not the unexceptional houses, but the tenants that live within the 64-year old neighborhood, some for just that long.

Neighborhood Origins

With the fear of our nation's entrance into World War II looming on the horizon in 1941, the need for ships to aid the Allied war effort was immense. Liberty Ships, as

they were called, were in high demand as illustrated in a 1943 issue of the shipyard employee newsletter entitled the "Sou'easter." It read, '...to better do our full share in answering the call of the Allies which rings loudest - "Ships, Ships - Hurry, Hurry." ' To build ships takes shipyard workers, and those workers need a place to live.

Construction of the Josiah Tattnall project of 750 housing units was completed in 1943. It was constructed to house the workers of the Savannah shipyards and was designed by architects Cletus W. Bergen and Walter Marshall. Hundreds of shipyard workers and their families resided in the Josiah Tattnall neighborhood, one of four neighborhoods built for that purpose.

Monthly rent was quite different then. For \$40.50 per month, all utilities included, a family could rent a four bedroom unit. A sharp contrast to today's prices indeed.

In order to secure a unit, the worker had to visit an Administration Building, present his badge and give the staff his name. Units were assigned in order of their necessity, with families living in "desperate conditions" being given priority. The worker was then given a certificate which they took to the government housing office, and there signed a lease.

A Hard Day's Work

Have you ever heard the term "Rosie the Riveter?" The fictional character represents the women that worked in factories and shipyards during World War II. The Savannah shipyard employed a number of women, one in particular by the name of Natalie Moody.



Ms. Moody moved to the neighborhood in 1978. She once worked in the shipyards as a welder, a job most commonly held by men. Ms. Moody relays her amazing story with a smile, most definitely from the recollection of happy memories.

She met her future husband while working on construction of a ship. Workers assisted her by lowering down metal plates that she then welded into place. The man who was to become her future husband was one of those that assisted her. "He wouldn't let me do anything," she recalls, "He did everything for me." They soon married and raised three children.

Now 90 years old, Ms. Moody has seen many changes in the area and is hopeful about the project, the positive changes it will bring and the possibility of continuing to live in the neighborhood. "I have so much history here, I can't imagine moving."

Honoring their Efforts

It is important that while the community goes through this important and long overdue revitalization, we remember and honor the efforts of those who first lived in the neighborhood and worked for the shipyards. Without their efforts and hard work, the life we live today might be very different.

Author's Note: Thank you to Mr. Charles E. Varner of Hilton Head, South Carolina, retired engineer and self-titled lay historian, for his assistance with this article. His knowledge of and research on historic Savannah neighborhoods was invaluable and this article would not have been possible without his help.

Appreciation also goes to the many residents of Strathmore Estates that relayed their stories and personal history in the neighborhood.

Summer Brings Heat, Humidity and Youth Volunteers

Deloris Jackson lives in a modest, yet adequate home in a quiet community in west Savannah. Pictures of her three sons, three daughters-in-law, and eight grandchildren cover the walls of her living room. Her home, in good condition but in need of an exterior paint job, was chosen by the City's Housing Department to receive just such a makeover during the volunteer home repair program this year.

Youth volunteers and their chaperones travel from all over the United States to participate in the program, which assists low-income and elderly residents in Savannah by providing home repairs free of cost. The youth volunteers are members of church and civic organizations in their own communities, and come to Savannah to make a difference in ours.

Ms. Jackson expressed her appreciation for the volunteers and how helpful they were, "they come from such a long way, and they were so well mannered. I just don't know how I would have gotten it done without them. It is just wonderful."

The program has seen significant growth in popularity over the years, both with residents in need and with those looking to volunteer. It now attracts over 1,500 youth volunteers and helps to repair over 150 homes each year. Residents need only complete an application and submit it to

the Housing Department to be considered. The types of repairs range from exterior painting and minor repairs, to replacing a leaky roof.

Luke Gardiner, Program Manager for the City's Housing Department, knows what a huge undertaking it is to prepare for the volunteers, "Savannah State University and a few Chatham County Board of Education schools provide lodging for the volunteers, while churches provide meals for them. Local and national hardware and home repair businesses sponsor the program and provide the supplies needed for the repairs. It is a community-wide effort and we want

to thank everyone that helps make the program such a success."

Local residents are welcome to participate in the program as volunteers and are encouraged to do so. The program truly does make a difference in our community by eliminating blight and assisting those that would otherwise be unable to complete needed home repairs on their own.

For more information about the volunteer home repair program, call the City of Savannah's Housing Department at (912)651-6927.



Eliminating Blight, One Lot at a Time

One of the City Council's top priorities is to eliminate blight. One part of the City's comprehensive blight eradication program is the Grants for Neighborhoods program.

The Grants for Neighborhoods program was created in 2000, replacing the Grants for Blocks program. The program provides funding to eligible neighborhood associations so that they may assist elderly members of their communities

with lawn and lot maintenance, as well as litter removal.

Grants ranging from \$7,000 to \$10,000 are awarded each year. Neighborhood associations complete an application process which begins in December, and the funds are awarded in April. Youth volunteers are enlisted to mow lawns, pick up litter and maintain lots. Over 120 youth are involved in the program. The funding is used to pay the youth volunteers stipends

and to purchase the equipment they use.

The grant funds come from the federal government through Community Development Block Grant funds, as well as through the General Fund. The program is administered by the City's Community Services Department.

For more information about the Grants for Neighborhoods program, please call (912)651-6520.



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Leadership Development Institute Holds “Super Saturday”

When we consider effective, positive community change, we understand that it is a day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute commitment. Community leaders are integral in creating change and motivating others to step up and become active participants in that effort. Some leaders are born, others possess the desire to lead but need help in developing the necessary skills to motivate people toward a common goal. The City of Savannah’s Community Planning and Development Department offers a program designed to develop those skills in both adults and youth.

The Leadership Development Institute offers residents several leadership programs including quarterly Super Saturday Mini Institutes, the annual Teen Leadership Summit, the Technical Assistance Program for Community Organizations, Youth LEAD and the Faith-

based Capacity Building Program. The Institute also offers leadership training through other established community programs including YouthBuild and Parent University.

The Leadership Development Institute held its most recent Super Saturday on September 15, at the Coastal Georgia Center. The event was well attended with over 150 individuals participating in workshops on topics including fundraising and recruiting community volunteers. Youth workshops encouraged teens to envision the future they would like for their communities, and coached them on how to become effective leaders.

Ella Williamson, a Super Saturday workshop facilitator, explained the importance of the program and the opportunities it provides, “A lot of the people that attend the workshops find out that people in other neighborhoods are facing the same issues.

They network and exchange ideas, and most of the time find that what works in one community may work in another. They benefit from the experiences of others.”

The next Super Saturday will be held in February 2008. More details will be available soon.

For more information on the Leadership Development Institute, please call Lillian Grant-Baptiste, Leadership Development Coordinator, at 912-525-3100, ext. 1625.

